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CURRENT MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

WILLIAM BENNETT MUNRO

The upper house of the New York Legislature has rejected the so-termed Grady Amendments to the charter of New York City but by so doing has put the whole question of charter revision for the metropolis back where it was three years ago.

In April, 1908, Governor Hughes appointed a board, commonly known as the Ivins Commission, to consider and report upon changes needed in the organic laws of the city. After nearly a year of careful study this commission presented a report recommending the passage of a new charter condensed into a document of about 75,000 words, and of a more extended administrative code which would contain all such permanent municipal regulations as were not sufficiently fundamental to be placed in the charter. The Ivins Commission also recommended an important increase in the functions and powers of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment and the division of its administrative jurisdiction into seven central bureaus. It urged that powers now vested in the five borough presidents should be given to a street commissioner named by the mayor; that the existing Board of Aldermen be reorganized into an unpaid council of thirty-nine members; and that some extensions should be made in the existing powers of the mayor. A bill embodying the recommendations of this committee was introduced in the New York Legislature during March, 1909, but did not receive a favorable committee report in either house. In April, however, the Legislature agreed to a resolution referring the measure and all other matters connected with charter revision to a joint recess committee composed of three senators and five assemblymen, and instructed this committee to report not later than February, 1910. This committee, since commonly known as the Grady Committee, proceeded to set aside most of the Ivins recommendations and, without taking the public into its confidence, prepared a number of amendments to the existing New York charter. Meanwhile Mayor Gaynor had the city's law department draft a charter embodying his own ideas and this was sent forward to Albany, where it supplanted, in the favor of the state Democratic machine, the belated recommenda-

tions of the Grady Committee. It was at first proposed to hurry the mayor's proposals through the Legislature without allowing time for adequate discussion, but a chorus of protests from New York civic organizations and a hint of veto action by Governor Dix induced the Legislature to delay attempts at enactment until public hearings could be held. These hearings, crowded into a few days, were held in New York where a large and influential opposition to many of the proposed amendments made itself apparent.

Opposition was directed particularly to the proposals which aimed to curtail the present powers of the Board of Estimate by adding some of its authority to the already extensive powers of the mayor. Objection was also made to the proposed increase in the mayor's salary and to the elimination of the charter provision whereby the mayor may now be suspended from office by the governor for due cause. Most vigorous of all, however, was the protest against the proposed change in the organization of the New York Board of Education. The mayor proposed to supplant the present unpaid board of forty-six members by a small paid commission, the members of which should be named by the mayor. This project evoked criticism from leading educational experts in all parts of the country including the presidents of several universities. The Legislature's committee took under advisement the various suggestions filed with it at the hearings, went back to Albany, and after making some few changes sent its bill again forward for enactment. The measure passed the Assembly, but the independent stand taken by some half-dozen Democratic senators secured its defeat in the upper house. The outcome, although it means that some years of effort have gone for nothing tangible, is pleasing to all but the politicians.

A well-organized attempt to disembowel the new Boston charter was frustrated by the action of the state Senate during the early summer. Three provisions of this charter which have placed a handicap upon the activities of political spoilsmen during the past couple of years are those which established the system of nomination by petition and of election by a short ballot without party designations, those which reduced the city council to a body of nine members elected at large, and those which required that all heads of city departments, appointed by the mayor, should be approved by the state civil service commission before their appointments became effective. An attempt was made to modify all three of these provisions so that party designa-

tions would once more appear on the ballot, the council would be enlarged and its members chosen by wards, and the confirming powers of the civil service commission transferred to the city council. The machines of both political parties appeared to be in full co-operation in support of the changes and the first of the so-called "ripper bills" passed the House of Representatives by a large majority. But the united efforts of the various Boston civic and commercial organizations together with the unanimous protest of the local newspapers made possible the defeat of the measure in the Senate.

The International Municipal Congress and Exposition held in Chicago from September 18 to 30, was successful in every respect. The exhibits illustrating recent progress in appliances for municipal work were quite up to expectations, and included interesting contributions from several foreign cities, notably from Antwerp, Rotterdam, Cologne and Milan. New York, Chicago, Cleveland and Pittsburgh sent the most extensive American displays. The sessions devoted to the discussion of municipal problems were well attended by delegates from all the leading American municipalities and by representatives from many European, Canadian and South American cities. Among the chief topics discussed at these sessions were city charters, municipal accounting and efficiency statistics, city planning, public utilities, local taxation, parks and playgrounds and school management. It is to be hoped that the addresses and discussions will be made available in printed form.

The degree of interest now being taken throughout the country in commission government for cities is attested by the recent appearance of no fewer than four useful volumes devoted to discussions of this theme. The first of these, entitled *City Government by Commission*, by Dr. Ford H. MacGregor, is issued as a Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin. It is a historical and critical study of 135 pages, with an excellent bibliography. Dr. MacGregor has performed his task with discrimination and painstaking care. Under the editorship of Hon. Clinton Rogers Woodruff, the first volume of the new National Municipal League Series has appeared—an attractive volume which also bears the title *City Government by Commission* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1911, pp. x, 381). The book includes papers upon the subject, *pro* and *con*, which have been read at various times before the annual meetings of the League, together with some discussions;

that have taken place elsewhere, and a large amount of new matter written by the editor. It is a timely and well-executed compilation, containing a comprehensive list of books and other materials bearing upon the subject, and a full index. *The Government of Cities by Commission* by Dr. Ernest S. Bradford (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911) is the third volume on the subject. It gives particular attention to the variations in the type of commission government adopted by different cities. Mr. John J. Hamilton of Des Moines, Iowa, has issued, through Messrs. Funk & Wagnalls, the second edition of his volume which appeared a couple of years ago as *The Dethronement of the City Boss*, and in publishing this new edition has changed the title of the book to *City Government by Commission*. With Professor Beard's compilation of commission charters these various volumes supply all the information upon this particular topic that any charter-revising organization can require.

The fifteenth annual convention of the League of American Municipalities was held at Atlanta on October 4 to 6. Among interesting papers presented were those on "Municipal Insurance Bonds" by Wilson J. Vance of Newark, N. J.; on "What a Live City Can Do under an Antiquated Charter" by Hon. J. C. Haynes, mayor of Minneapolis; and on "The Board of Public Welfare," by Jacob Billikopf of Kansas City.

Reports giving the results of the decennial census in Great Britain and in the German Empire have come to hand and show the steady progress of urban concentration in these countries.

The census figures for England and Wales show an increase in the population of seventy-five county boroughs from 9,983,848 in 1901 to 10,871,260 in 1911. The administrative county of London has decreased slightly, from 4,536,267 to 4,522,961; but greater London (corresponding to the city and metropolitan police district) has increased from 6,581,402 to 7,252,963.

The census of the German Empire, taken in December 1, 1910, shows 281 cities of over 10,000 population (compared with 263 in 1905), 120 with over 25,000, 61 with more than 50,000 and 32 with more than 100,000.

Oberbürgermeister Kirschner of Berlin has been reelected for a second term of twelve years.

The *Situation financière des communes* issued annually by the French Ministry of the Interior shows that, in 1910, the municipalities of the French Republic had ordinary budgets totaling 943 million francs—an increase of eleven millions over the total of the preceding year. Octroi taxes yielded 283 million francs, a decrease of seven millions compared with 1909. The aggregate municipal debt on December 31 was 4,187,838,069 francs.

Among the more important of recent European publications in the field of municipal government and closely-allied fields are: G. Montagu Harris, *Problems of Local Government* (London: P. S. King & Co., 1911, pp. ix, 464); M. M. Penstone, *Town Study* (London: 1910, pp. xii, 454); P. Hirsch and H. Lindemann, *Das kommunale Wahlrecht* (2 ed., Berlin: 1911); A. Miethe, *Ueber Lichtverhältnisse in Grosstädten* (Berlin: 1911); Rudolf Eberstadt, *Bodenparzellierung und Wohnstrassen* (Berlin: 1911); Hans Volkmann, *Die künstlerische Verwendung des Wassers im Städtebau* (Berlin: Heymann's Verlag, 1911, pp. viii, 124); Otto Wagner, *Die Grosstadt* (Vienna: Schroll, 1911); Kurt Wolzendorff, *Polizei und Prostitution* (Tübingen: 1911, pp. iii, 76); Heinrich Schulz, *Die Schulreform der Sozialdemokratie* (Dresden: Kaden, 1911, pp. xiv, 263); Albin Curet, *Les Communes et les lois de séparation* (Paris: A. Pedone, 1910, pp. 327); A. Riess, *Kommunale Wirtschaftspflege* (Leipsic: 1911); *The London Citizens' Year Book, 1911-12* (London: P. S. King, 1911); and the *Handbook of the Work of the London County Council for 1909* (London: P. S. King & Co., 1911).

An Act of Parliament was passed early in June enlarging the boundaries of Birmingham. This city now has a population of 867,000, about 60,000 more than Glasgow, and has taken the place of the latter as the second largest city in Great Britain. An effort is being made to extend the boundaries of Glasgow, so as to absorb several contiguous suburban burghs, which will make the population of Glasgow more than a million.

The commission form of municipal government continues to spread throughout the country; but in some instances the proposition has been defeated. The adoptive act passed by the Illinois Legislature in 1910 has been voted on by about thirty cities and villages and accepted in about twenty. Among the cities adopting the commission plan are Springfield, Decatur, Elgin, Rock Island, Moline, Jackson-

ville and Ottawa; while it was defeated in Peoria, Quincy, Joliet, Galesburg, Bloomington and Champaign. An adoptive act for commission government in municipalities was passed in New Jersey in April, 1911. This has been adopted in Trenton and Passaic; and defeated in Bayonne, Hoboken and New Brunswick. An act of the Pennsylvania Legislature replaces the city council of Pittsburgh by a commission of nine men. The first commissioners are said to be business and professional men, although approved by the state Republican organization. Successors to these commissioners will be elected at large next year.

A recent enumeration shows that 161 cities in 32 states have adopted commission government. The largest of these cities is Omaha, Neb., with a population of 135,000. Voting on the adoption of a commission charter which includes a provision for preferential voting will take place in Cambridge, Mass., at the coming state election.

A careful and detailed investigation of the social evil in Chicago has been made by a commission appointed by the mayor, which submitted its report and recommendations to the city council on April 5, 1911. The commission consisted of thirty persons, including business men, philanthropists, physicians, lawyers, judges, teachers and two women. Their investigations included an examination of amusement places, the commercializing of vice, the relation between prostitution and the liquor business and the economic causes. The chief recommendation was for persistent repression as the immediate method, with annihilation as the ultimate ideal. More specifically, the commission asked for the appointment of a Morals Commission to study the social disease and propose new regulations from time to time, and for the organization of a Morals Court to deal with cases connected with prostitution.

The Illinois Legislature, at the regular session of 1911, passed a series of important civil service laws, one enlarging the jurisdiction of the state commission so as to cover most of the state service, and three extending the merit system in the local governments of Chicago and Cook County. The county law includes the entire service of Cook County, and will also apply to other counties when they reach a population of 150,000. One of the other acts places under the merit system the employees in the parks of Chicago; and the third will extend the municipal system to include about 250 employees in the municipal courts, upon adoption by popular vote at the next election.

A well-appointed building is being constructed by the City Club of Chicago, in Plymouth Court, near Jackson Boulevard. This will be ready for occupancy in October.

Important plans for providing more adequate freight terminals in New York City have been prepared by the municipal authorities. One plan, presented by a sub-committee of the Board of Estimate, proposes the development of a series of unit terminals along the North River water front, with terminal and storage buildings on the east side of West Street. Bills authorizing this plan passed the Legislature; but were disapproved by Mayor Gaynor, who favors the more comprehensive plans proposed by the Dock Commission. These latter call for a joint water terminal for all roads to be built between 30th and 40th streets, to be connected by an elevated freight railroad with the inland yards and storage warehouses and steamship piers. Bills for carrying out these plans passed the state Legislature early in July.

After an extensive consideration of various plans for the construction of new rapid transit subways in New York City, a comprehensive scheme was reported on June 5 by the Public Service Commission and a committee of the Board of Estimate. This project proposed the construction of certain lines by the city, other lines by the Interborough Company and still others by the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company, at a total estimated cost of \$250,000,000, with alternative plans for offering routes declined by one company to the other. After some negotiations and modifications, the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company agreed to accept the plans proposed.

The Fifteenth Session of the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography will be held at Washington, D. C., beginning September 23, 1912. In connection with the congress there will be an exhibit of state, municipal and volunteer work in public health and vital statistics, in charge of Dr. J. W. Scherechewsky of the United States Public Health Service.

The second volume of *Municipal Franchises* by Dr. Delos F. Wilcox appeared during the early summer. This part of the work deals with transportation franchises and with franchises for bridges, toll roads, docks and markets. One of the most interesting parts of the volume is the second chapter, which is entitled "The Elements of a Model

Street Railway Franchise." A full review will appear in a later issue of this publication.

A new (fifth) edition of Judge John F. Dillon's *Commentaries on the Law of Municipal Corporations* has recently been issued in five volumes (Boston: Little, Brown & Co.) Announcement has also been made of a six-volume work on the same subject by Judge Eugene McQuillin, who is known to students of municipal government through his treatise on *Municipal Ordinances*.

The Proceedings of the Buffalo Conference for Good City Government and the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League forms a bulky volume of 586 pages, including twenty-five papers and addresses on a variety of municipal problems. Among these may be mentioned: the address of the retiring president, Charles J. Bonaparte, on Patriotism in Municipal Affairs, and that of the new president, William Dudley Foulke, on Conservation in Municipalities; a comparison of Commission Forms of Government, by Ernest S. Bradford; and two papers on the Liquor Problem by Prof. A. R. Hatton of Western Reserve University and F. D. Bramhall of the University of Chicago.

During the past year the National Municipal League has had under consideration three new enterprises, all of which are of high interest and importance to those interested in municipal affairs. Two of these undertakings have already been definitely assumed by the League. The first is the issue of a series of small volumes, to be known as the National Municipal League Series and published by Messrs. D. Appleton & Co. Each of these volumes will be devoted to some single topic of contemporary interest in the field of municipal government and will contain a group of selected papers chosen mainly from those which have been presented at the various conventions of the organization, and which have been published in the League's annual *Proceedings*. A large amount of this material, much of which is of great value, has become almost inaccessible to general readers because the *Proceedings* for some years are now out of print. In addition to League papers other matter will be incorporated in each, so that it will embody a well-rounded survey of the topic with which it deals. The first volume in the series, which has already appeared, is edited by Hon. C. R. Woodruff and is devoted to the subject of *Commission Government*. The second volume on *The Initiative, Referendum and Recall* will be ready before the end of the year. A volume on *Constitutional*

Municipal Home Rule, edited by Prof. A. R. Hatton of Cleveland will appear shortly thereafter. Other volumes are planned to deal with *Municipal Franchises*, *City Planning*, *City Franchises*, *Municipal Recreation*, and *Municipal Health and Sanitation*. The books will be sold at popular prices.

A second undertaking is the publication of a quarterly periodical, to be called the *National Municipal Review* and to be devoted to the subject of municipal affairs in a broad sense. The review will be under the general editorship of the secretary of the League assisted by a small board of editors and a larger advisory council. The first number will appear in January. In addition to contributed articles there will be departments devoted to current municipal affairs, news and notes, bibliography and book reviews. Copies of the periodical will be furnished to members of the National Municipal League as part of the return for their annual membership dues of five dollars, and as the more important papers read at future League conventions will be printed in the new *Review*, the annual volume of *Proceedings* will be greatly reduced in size, and possibly dispensed with altogether.

A third enterprise, which is having consideration, is the publication, under the League's auspices, of a Municipal Year Book of the United States. It is suggested that such a volume, to be revised and reprinted annually, should follow the lines of the well-known and highly useful *Municipal Year Book of the United Kingdom* published by Lloyds of London.

The next annual meeting of the National Municipal League will be held at Richmond, Va., on November 13-17.

At the National Conference on City Planning held in Philadelphia, May 15-17, Mr. Raymond Unwin of London and Mr. Thomas Adams, town planning expert of the Local Government Board for England and Wales, were among the visitors from abroad.

The Second Annual Conference of mayors and municipal officials of New York was held at Poughkeepsie, May 25-27. Three hundred officials were present, representing practically all the cities of the state. The papers and discussions dealt with paving and care of streets, street lighting, taxation and budget making, forms of municipal government, rapid transit and water supply.

The Municipal Association of Cleveland has appointed a committee to make an investigation of the question of local self-government for cities, with reference to the work of the Ohio Constitutional Convention, which meets in January, 1912. The committee consists of Prof. A. R. Hatton of Western Reserve University, Newton D. Baker, L. H. Britton, A. J. Zaehr, James R. Garfield, T. P. Robbins and Warren S. Stone.

A temporary injunction granted by the United States Circuit Court enjoining the city of Denver, Col., from issuing \$8,000,000 bonds and taking other steps for the installation of a municipal water system has been upheld in a decision handed down by Judge Hook in the United States Circuit Court of Appeals. The New York Trust Company, holder of the first mortgage bonds of the Denver Water Company, alleged that the building of a new plant would amount to a confiscation of property without due process of law.

“Fifteen Years of Civic History” is the title of a recently published record of the activities of the Civic Club of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh, Pa., from its organization in 1895 through December, 1910.

The *Atlantic Monthly* for April, 1911, contained an interesting article by ex-Mayor George B. McClellan of New York City on “The Tendency of Municipal Government in the United States.” His chief thesis is that the extravagant tendency of the American city is “due to causes far more subtle and far more complicated than corrupt officials, dishonest bosses, or rotten political machines.” It is due largely, he believes, to the fact that of those voters who control the spending authority only about four per cent are the taxpayers who provide the bulk of the city’s income.

A series of interesting articles on “Aspects of Public Ownership” by Sydney Brooks is being printed in the current issues of the *North American Review*.

The Research Council of New York has issued, under the editorship of James B. Reynolds, a *Civic Bibliography for Greater New York* (Charities Publication Committee, 1911, pp. 296). It includes books and magazine articles relating to every branch of metropolitan govern-

ment and is provided with a good index. Every book and magazine mentioned in the list is to be had in one of the New York libraries.

The Civic League of St. Louis has compiled and issued a forty-page pamphlet entitled *A Directory of Civic and Business Associations in St. Louis*. Information is given concerning the purposes of each organization, its dues, its headquarters and the names and addresses of its principal officers. In scope it includes all organizations which exist primarily for civic betterment and all commercial or social organizations which take an interest in public affairs.

The Bureau of Economy and Efficiency recently established in Milwaukee has issued its first two bulletins. One sets forth the plan, purposes and methods of the Bureau; the other is devoted to a study of Alarm Telegraph Systems.

A fifty-page pamphlet on *The Prevention of Fire* issued by the Boston Chamber of Commerce forms a useful contribution to the rather meager data yet available on this subject. It contains some valuable statistical tables showing annual fire losses in European and American cities.

At the last session of the Massachusetts Legislature a resolve was adopted authorizing the governor to appoint a Metropolitan Plan Commission of three members. This Commission is given the duty of preparing a comprehensive project for the better coördination, other than by political consolidation, of the cities and towns in the Boston Metropolitan area. The members of the commission are Mr. Edward A. Filene, chairman, Messrs. J. Randolph Coolidge, Jr., and John Nolen. It is expected that their report will be presented to the next Legislature.

Municipal matters have had considerable attention from the voters of Maine during the past few months. Following the recent fire in Bangor the municipal authorities, against great opposition, have adopted in full the plans of an expert for the rebuilding of the burned district, which provide in part for the widening of the streets and the grouping of the public buildings.

At an election on September 11, it was decided by the voters of Maine that the capital of the state should be forever located at Augusta.

At the same election the question of permitting cities of over 40,000

population (which applies to Portland alone) to raise their debt limit to seven and one-half per cent of their total valuation, was submitted to the voters. It carried by a fair majority.

Gardiner, Me., by a vote of 723 to 181, adopted a new city charter providing for the commission form of government. The commission is composed of three men. It is the first city in Maine to adopt the commission form of government. On October 1 the voters of Waterville defeated the adoption of a new city charter providing for the commission form of government by a vote of 919 to 755.

The William H. Baldwin prize of \$100 annually awarded by the National Municipal League will be offered this year for the best essay on "The Appointment of Higher Municipal Officers by the Merit System." Competition is open to undergraduate students in any American college or university which offers distinct and independent instruction in municipal government. Essays must not exceed 10,000 words and must be sent, not later than March 15, 1912, to Hon. Clinton Rogers Woodruff, secretary of the League, Philadelphia, from whom further information concerning the terms of the competition may be obtained.

The city authorities of New York held their second annual budget exhibit during the first week of October. The exposition portrayed every department of municipal activity and lectures were given daily by the head or representative of some one of the city departments.

Delegates representing the property-owning companies and organizations of New York City are to have a convention on October 17 to organize a movement against the steadily increasing tax burdens which are being levied upon real estate in the greater city.

A commission of fifteen members has been appointed by the District Court to draft a new city charter for Minneapolis.

A movement is under way in St. Louis to federate all the public welfare organizations of the city under the leadership of a central committee. The Central Council of Civic Organizations, composed of delegates from about thirty of these bodies has been formed as the first step.

The City Council of Cleveland has voted to submit at the next election the question of a two-million-dollar bond issue for the construction of a municipal electric light and power plant. The proposal has received endorsement from the leaders of both political parties.

Delegates to a constitutional convention for the State of Ohio will be elected at the November elections. The convention itself will meet in January. In preparation for it the Municipal Association of Cleveland is preparing a digest of state constitutions.

At the Philadelphia municipal primaries on September 30, George H. Earle, Jr., the so-called "Penrose Candidate," was nominated for mayor on the Republican ticket, and Rudolph Blankenburg on the Keystone and Democratic tickets.¹

¹ For several of the items printed in the foregoing pages I am indebted to Prof. J. A. Fairlie of the University of Illinois and Prof. O. C. Hormell of Bowdoin College.—W. B. M.